

Rural & Frontier Health Division Update

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Welcome to the eighth issue of the "Rural and Frontier Health Division Update!" This newsletter is provided as an informational source on activities involving the programs and services within the division. Comments and/or suggestions are welcomed and may be addressed to WDH-RFHD@health.wyo.gov.

Office of Rural Health

New Critical Access Hospital:

On July 1, 2009, South Lincoln Medical Center in Kemmerer became the state's 15th Critical Access Hospital, or CAH.

Congress enacted the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which allowed for CAH designation. CAHs are small, rural, acute care hospitals. The primary benefit of CAH designation is that they are exempt from the inpatient and outpatient prospective payment system and receive cost-based reimbursement for services based on 101 percent of the CAH's reasonable costs. Additionally, CAHs are able to claim capital improvement and equipment costs in the Medicare cost report, and are eligible for grants and network participation not available to all hospitals.

The CAHs in Wyoming have developed the Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network (WCAHN) to serve as a collaborative support system that synergistically strengthens member hospitals in order to sustain access to quality healthcare services. The Wyoming Flex Program, funded by the federal Office of Rural Health Policy, has partnered with the Wyoming Hospital Association to provide leadership and resources to the WCAHN. To learn more about WCAHN's activities, or critical access hospitals, please visit the WCAHN website <http://www.wcahn.org/index.php> or the Office of Rural Health website <http://www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/index.html>.

Annual Report:

The Office of Rural Health's Annual Report is available at: <http://wdh.state.wy.us/Media.aspx?mediaId=7204>. A limited number of printed copies are also available. Please contact Keri at the Office of Rural Health if you would like a printed copy: 307-777-6512 or keri.wagner1@health.wyo.gov.

National Health Service Corps:

The NHSC's "Bureau of Clinician Recruitment and Service (BCRS) has received nearly 3,000 loan repayment applications to date. However, for approximately 2,200 of these applications, the applicant has not submitted any of the required supporting documentation necessary for a loan repayment award to be made. To address this problem, BCRS has enlisted the assistance of HRSA Regional Office staff, the National Association of Community Health Centers, the State Primary Care Offices, and the State Primary Care Associations.

For your information, the Applicant Information Bulletin along with the required forms and submission instructions can be found on our web site at <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov>. Should you or the clinician require further assistance, please contact the NHSC by e-mail at nhsclrp@hrsa.gov or CallCenter@hrsa.gov any time, or by telephone at 1-800-221-9393.”

Telehealth/Telemedicine

Emergency Services:

There is a proposed project to extend emergency services statewide via the telehealth network. The initial telemedicine services would cover stroke treatment as currently provided by the Wyoming Medical Center and then expand into treatment of myocardial infarction. These programs could be further expanded to include additional emergency services to hospitals statewide.

Additional equipment would be needed, such as telemedicine carts in emergency departments, an upgraded bridge, firewall traversal systems, and home/office equipment for treating physicians. Costs were estimated at approximately \$700,000 statewide, with ARRA stimulus funds as a potential source. Related topics being considered are:

- Linking nursing homes to the telehealth network
- Anticipated costs to the hospitals
- Billing for services
- Insurance reimbursement
- Services available through the Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center (NRTRC) and the Northwest Stroke Consortium
- Extension of this program to include emergency services as provided in Mississippi
- Medical malpractice insurance implications.

ARRA funding will be requested for needed equipment and software for this project expansion.

Update on FCC and ORHP Grants:

The initial FCC procurement resulted in a notice of intent to select Qwest Communications as the vendor on the FCC grant. USAC approval is still required before the contract can be finalized, but prompt approval is expected. At this point, 53 sites have expressed interest in the FCC grant funding. Anticipated time to install the new lines following contract approval is six months, with UW personnel providing contract oversight. Second year funding under the ORHP grant has been approved.

Network Usage for May 2009:

- 27 hosted events in May – CME, CEU, other educational
- 300 participants statewide
- Estimated savings for May of \$22,900
- Focus of efforts shifting to clinical applications
- Technical resources are scarce
- Demand for services continues to increase
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) wants to use the system for training EMS personnel statewide.

ARRA Update:

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) is gathering information on needs via the WDH website – <http://telehealth.health.wyo.gov>, - but is still waiting on further grant application guidance from the federal agencies. It is estimated that 50 physician practices in Wyoming would be eligible for the Medicaid incentive funding under the ARRA.

New Telehealth Consortium:

On August 26 the Wyoming Telemedicine/Telehealth Consortium met for the first time. The mission of the Consortium is to facilitate the operation of a statewide interoperable telemedicine/telehealth network using existing internet protocol based communication and videoconferencing infrastructure and telecommunication services to the extent possible.

Initial Consortium activities will consist of, but not be limited to the following:

- Coordinate the development and promotion of statewide standards for an interoperable telemedicine/telehealth network and, where applicable, promote definitions and standards for statewide electronic health transactions;
- Promote and conduct education programs that inform network users that information communicated through the use of telemedicine/telehealth shall conform with state and federal privacy and security laws and information security programs established by the state chief information officer;
- Seek funds and contract as necessary to carry out its activities;
- Establish operating policies and procedures as needed to carry out its responsibilities.

Officers:

Chairperson: James Bush, MD, Wyoming Department of Health
Vice-Chairperson: Dana Barnett, Cheyenne Regional Medical Center
Treasurer: Dan Perdue, Wyoming Hospital Association
Secretary: Rolly Maldonado, WY Department of Corrections

Membership organizations represented in the Consortium are: Wyoming Department of Health, Wyoming Chief Information Officer, Wyoming Medical Center, University of Wyoming Center for Rural Health Research and Education, Wyoming Medical Society, Wyoming Health Information Organization, Peak Wellness Centers, Wyoming Department of Corrections, Wyoming Department of Employment, Wyoming Primary Care Association, Wyoming Business Council, Veteran's Administration, Indian Health Services, Wyoming Telecommunications Association, and a consumer representative.

Community Services Programs**Bridges Out of Poverty:**

Community Services Programs, through the use of federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) training and technical assistance funding, has sponsored six "Bridges Out of Poverty" workshops across the state. A total of 250 people attended from a variety of service organizations. Terie Dreussi-Smith, co-author and presenter of the Bridges program, served as instructor for the two-day seminars in Cheyenne, Sheridan, Powell, Jackson, Riverton, and Green River in late July and early August. Workshop participants included CSBG tripartite board members and CSBG funded service providers, Department of Family Services (DFS) personnel, local and state healthcare providers, and others with an interest in addressing the consequences of poverty in Wyoming.

The seminars were designed to give both social service providers and community members key lessons in dealing with individuals from poverty. Topics included increasing awareness of the difference in economic cultures, how those differences affect opportunities for success, developing an action plan to improve services to clients and improving retention rates for new hires from poverty.

Donate Life Night at Mike Lansing Field:

The Wyoming Cares/Wyoming Shares program participated in Donate Life Night at Mike Lansing Field in Casper August 28, as the Casper Ghosts lost to the Ogden Raptors. The Ghosts are a Colorado Rockies farm team and the Raptors are a Los Angeles Dodgers farm club.

As a promotion for Donate Life Wyoming, Donate Life baseball caps and tee shirts were given out to the first 1000 fans at the gate, and player jerseys were auctioned off with the proceeds to go to the Wyoming Cares/Wyoming Shares program. The green jerseys were worn by the Casper team, and were then awarded to the highest bidder by the player who had worn the shirt. The highest bid was for the jersey worn by first round draft pick Tyler Matzek, who was signed by the Rockies organization and assigned on as a pitcher to the Casper Ghosts on August 25.

Donate Life Night was sponsored by Wyoming Cares/Wyoming Shares, Donor Alliance, Donor Awareness, and the Rocky Mountain Eye Bank to promote organ donations in Wyoming. In addition to the caps and tee shirts, fans were given pins, patches, bracelets, and other Donate Life promotional items and were invited to sign up to be organ donors.

Vital Statistics Services

Fundamental Facts about Wyoming Marriages and Divorces, 2007:

Wyoming marriages (4,837 in 2007) have remained at about the same level over the past 20 years; while the number of divorces is declining slowly [see Figure 1]. Marriage and divorce (9.5 and 5.0 per 1,000) rates in 2007 both exceeded national rates of 7.5 marriages and 3.6 divorces per thousand. Because Wyoming's population has been increasing, marriage and divorce rates have been eroding over the past 20 years.

The median age of marriage in Wyoming was 30.9 years old for the bride and 32.4 for the groom in 2007 with brides and grooms being a little older in lower population density areas and younger in urban areas. Age patterns were very similar at divorce – wives (36.1 years old) younger than husbands (38.8 years old) – and low population density older, urban younger.

In 2007, July was the month of most marriages in Wyoming. From a potential tourism perspective, 17% of the marriages involved visitors to Wyoming [see Figure 2].

Figure 1. NUMBER OF MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES/ANNULMENTS IN WYOMING 1988 - 2007

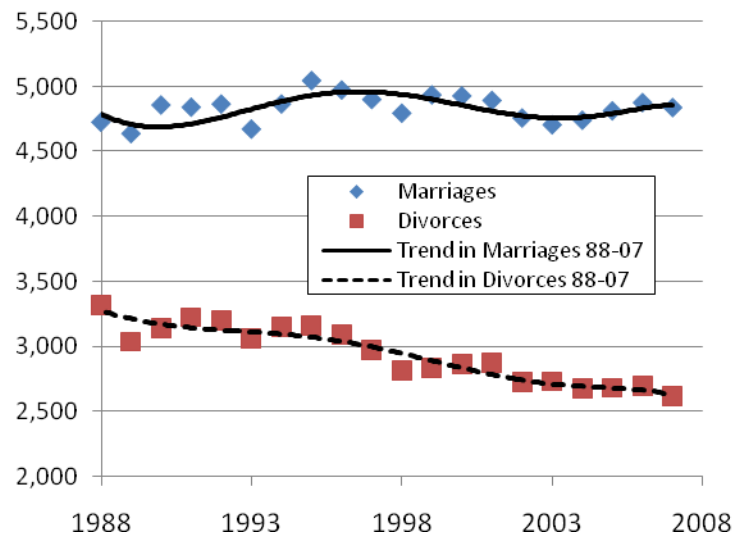
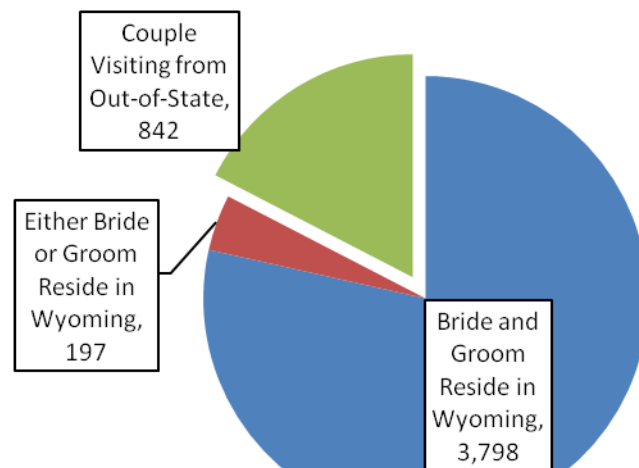


Figure 2. NUMBER OF MARRIAGES AMONG WYOMING AND OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENTS, 2007



RECENT NEWS FROM THE RURAL ASSISTANCE CENTER:

Grants.Gov Web Site Offers New Feature for Information on Applying for All ARRA Federal Grants

Aug 4, 2009 -- HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today unveiled a new feature on Grants.gov to help users find and apply for The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant opportunities.

House Passes Appropriations Bill with Significant Increases for Rural Programs

Jul 29, 2009 -- The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) reports that on July 24, the House passed H.R. 3293, the appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education by a vote of 264 to 153, matching NRHA's requests for rural programs and also provided increases for other programs important to rural health.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant Funds Available:

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has announced that funding is available for "Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant Program".

The purpose of the Network Planning Grant Program is to (1) achieve efficiencies, (2) expand access to, coordinate and improve the quality of essential health care services, and (3) strengthen the rural health care system as a whole. This program brings together key parts of a rural health care delivery system so they can work together to establish or improve local capacity and coordination of care, particularly those entities that may not have collaborated in the past.

Grants applications are due September 14, 2009. The full guidance can be found on the Office of Rural Health website <http://health.wyo.gov/rfhd/rural/index.html>.

HRSA requires applicants to notify the Office of Rural Health that they are applying for Network Planning Grant Program funds. The ORH will provide a letter of support if the applicant requests one; please contact Sharla at the ORH at 307-777-7293 or sharla.allen@health.wyo.gov.

\$1.2 Billion Available to Help Hospitals and Doctors Use Electronic Health Records:

The grants will be funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and will help providers qualify for new incentives available in 2010 to doctors and hospitals that meaningfully use electronic health records.

Lalor Foundation:

The Lalor Foundation, which seeks to educate young women about reproduction to broaden their options in life, is offering nonprofits providing such counseling grants from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Grants are generally awarded for one year. The program focuses particularly on young women who have inadequate access to information regarding reproductive health, including the subjects of contraception and pregnancy termination, and as such may be particularly lacking options in their lives.

The funding program emphasizes support for:

- Projects that demonstrate realistic plans to achieve greater financial self-sufficiency.
- New or smaller organizations, including grassroots efforts.
- Collaborative efforts among nonprofit organizations.
- New ideas, initiatives and demonstration projects that may be successfully replicated or provide multiple benefits.

Concept papers are accepted twice a year. Visit <http://www.cdpublications.com/d092> for more information, or call **1-800-666-6380**.

Healthy Environments

Application deadline: Applications accepted on an ongoing basis.

Funding to improve the health and well being of vulnerable children from low-income families by making the places they live, learn and play safe and supportive of overall good health.

Safety-net Enhancemeent Initiative

Application deadline: Applications accepted on an ongoing basis.

Funding designed to reduce health disparities within vulnerable communities by enhancing collaboration and coordination among agencies and institutions providing health and social supports to these communities.

UnitedHealth HEROES Service Learning Grants

Geographic Coverage: 34 states and the District of Columbia

Application deadline: Oct 22, 2009

Funding to support youth-led projects that address childhood obesity.

Upcoming Events:

- Rural Health Clinic Conference, October 6-7, 2009, Portland, OR
- Access Hospital Conference, October 7-9, 2009, Portland, OR
- NOSORH Annual Conference, November 17-19, Austin, TX

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.health.wyo.gov/rfhd